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ABSTRACT

Guidelines to help colleges develop standards of satisfactory academic progress to maintain federal financial aid eligibility are presented. Guidelines concerning policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and athletic eligibility are also provided. Suggestions concerning academic standards for federal aid recipients include: issuing a statement of institutional policy on academic progress; limiting the amount of time allowed for students in different enrollment categories to complete their objectives to be eligible to receive federal financial aid; describing procedures for appeal and reinstatement; and evaluating a student's academic standing and progress at least once per year. In assessing problems associated with academic integrity and athletic eligibility, attention is directed to the following concerns: the coach as an educator; the locus of responsibility for the institution's athletic program; policies and procedures for handling transcripts and test scores and for assuring that the student athlete makes satisfactory academic progress; transfer of credit and acceptance of courses offered by other institutions; transfer from two-year institutions; specially admitted student athletes; and analysis of admissions and academic performance of student athletes. (SW)

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SELF-REGULATION INITIATIVES:

GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

No. 5 and No. 6

December 1981

JOINT STATEMENT ON STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS TO MAINTAIN FINANCIAL AID ELIGIBILITY [and] ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY.

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Self-Regulation Initiatives: Guidelines for Colleges and Universities

No. 5
December 1981

Joint Statement on Standards of Satisfactory Academic Progress to Maintain Financial Aid Eligibility

The Education Amendments of 1976 required that institutions limit federal financial aid to those students who, according to institutional standards, were in good standing and making satisfactory progress. A 1978 study of the management of federal financial aid programs by the General Accounting Office took serious exception to the paucity of such standards and to evidence of institutional nonadherence even when standards did exist.

Senator Pell (D.-R.I.), who held hearings on the subject of satisfactory academic progress during the development of the 1980 Education Amendments, proposed a requirement that students successfully complete at least 75 percent of their initial academic load per term or period. Although he was persuaded not to insist on so stringent a requirement, the intent of Congress clearly was to give the education community an opportunity to develop effective self-regulatory standards. The need for such standards has increased with the recent removal of the limit on years of eligibility for receiving Pell and SEOG awards.

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators have proposed the following guidelines to assist institutions in developing their own standards of satisfactory academic progress to maintain federal financial aid eligibility. In doing so, institutions should consider the relation between these standards and other institutional policies regarding academic progress.

A. Each institution should take all necessary steps to fulfill the federal requirement to implement and make public the standards for satisfactory academic progress that students must meet to be eligible to receive federal financial aid.

   The statement of institutional policy on satisfactory academic progress for purposes of continued aid eligibility should be available to all requesting it and should be made public through readily available institutional publications. Each federal financial aid recipient should be provided with a copy of the institutional statement of satisfactory academic progress.

B. In establishing standards of satisfactory academic progress, each institution should respond to the diversity of its students and academic programs. Within a given category and program, such standards should be applied consistently to all students receiving federal financial aid.

   Each institution should establish standards in accordance with the diversity of its students, for instance, to recognize differences in educational objective and between full-time and part-time status. Once established, such standards should be uniformly applied to all students receiving federal financial aid within a given category. For example, all full-time students in a given institution and program should be expected to maintain the same minimum academic progress.

C. Each institution should establish and announce a reasonable length of time for students receiving federal financial aid to complete their educational objectives. This time should be consistent with the academic goal of the student and would vary according to enrollment status. The institution's policy on standards of academic progress should include a statement of the effect on academic progress and financial aid eligibility of course incompletion, course withdrawal, course repetition, and noncredit remedial courses.

   Institutions should establish limits on the amount of time allowed for students in different enrollment categories (e.g., full-time, half-time) to complete their objectives to be eligible to receive federal financial aid. The time established should include any additional time needed to complete noncredit remedial courses. The institution's policy should clearly describe the effect on satisfactory progress of course incompletion, course withdrawals, and course repetition. A given institution may decide to impose a limit on the number of course incompletions, course withdrawals, and course repetitions. Clock-hour institutions should establish a maximum number of clock hours of instruction for students to complete their programs.

The Board of Directors of the American Council on Education approved this statement on October 13, 1981, following a process of review and comment among other education associations. We are grateful to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators for developing this statement, which outlines the elements of good practice that institutions should follow in meeting the federal requirement that students be making satisfactory progress in their studies in order to continue to receive federal financial aid.

We urge all colleges and universities to review these guidelines as a basis for ensuring the proper administration of financial aid funds.

J. W. Peltason, President

D. Procedures for appeal and reinstatement of aid should be part of each institution's policy on satisfactory progress and should be readily available in writing to all students receiving federal financial aid. When an institution denies aid, reviews a case, or reinstates a student who was previously considered not to be making satisfactory progress, documentation to justify the action must be maintained.

   Institutional policy should clearly describe the procedures for appeal and reinstatement, possibly including the conditions under which an appeal may be sought and the procedures by which students may satisfy the deficiencies that led to ineligibility.

E. Evaluation of a student's academic standing and progress to determine federal financial aid eligibility should be made before each award period, but no less often than once per year.

   Although some institutions are able to make a formal evaluation of a student's progress after each academic term, many other institutions, due to processing and time constraints, are not able to do so. If an institution can complete formal evaluations only once per year, an effort should be made to conduct more frequent evaluation/monitoring during the year. This will be particularly important in situations involving a probation/warning status or with appeals and reinstatement.

This statement is one in a series of policy guidelines developed to help higher education respond to issues by means of voluntary self-regulation. The Office on Self-Regulation Initiatives, a program of the American Council on Education, works cooperatively with representative associations and institutional leaders in identifying issues on which self-regulation is needed, formulating responses to those issues, and distributing the resulting guidelines and recommendations.

College and university administrators are urged to review the guidelines as a basis for considering changes in existing institutional policies. Each statement is developed through a process of wide review among representatives of different types of institutions and professional responsibilities in higher education. They are intended to summarize general principles of good practice that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of each college and university.

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For further information, contact Elaine El-Khawas, Director, Office on Self-Regulation Initiatives. Additional copies of this statement may be obtained upon request to the office. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036

Self-Regulation Initiatives:
Guidelines for Colleges and Universities

No. 6
December 1981

Academic Integrity and Athletic Eligibility

Introduction

Two characteristics should be paramount in collegiate athletics. One, the athlete, in order to represent the institution in athletic competition, must first be a student making satisfactory progress toward an educational goal. Two, the status of the athlete must be that of an amateur. Without these characteristics, collegiate athletics forfeits its legitimacy as a college and university activity, and the integrity of the institution is diminished.

Because of the emphasis placed on winning, both by external and internal interests, colleges and universities may encounter pressures to follow practices that, if left unattended, threaten the integrity of their academic programs. In face of pressures to keep athletes eligible for competition, these problem areas should be identified, and acceptable policies and practices instituted to assure the academic integrity of the institution.

This statement is an effort by the American Council on Education and other interested education associations to assist institutions in examining their present policies and procedures with respect to academic integrity and athletic eligibility. It is not a prescriptive document that an institution can adopt without considering its own specific circumstances. It is intended to supplement but not replace the various rules on athletic eligibility that have been adopted by national and regional athletic conferences, councils, and governing bodies. The statement is presented in the spirit that, although voluntary external agencies are essential in the regulation of collegiate athletics, self-regulation is most admirable and effective when it flows from sound intrainstitutional policies and practices and from basic values and qualities inherent in the institution.

This statement is intended as a companion document to the November 1979 collegiate athletics policy statements issued by the American Council on Education.[1]

Areas for Special Attention

The Council, after studying the problems associated with academic integrity and athletic eligibility, recommends that the following matters be given special attention by institutions.

1 "Collegiate Athletics Policy Statements," "Self-Regulation Initiatives: Guidelines for Colleges and Universities," No. 3 (Washington: American Council on Education, 1979).

This policy statement was approved by the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education after development by a committee composed of representatives of chief academic officers, ACE, the National Collegiate Athletics Association, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women.

Reviews of the statement were conducted by the Interassociation Presidents' Committee on Collegiate Athletics, the National University Continuing Education Association, the ACE Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials, and the ACE Committee on Self-Regulation.

The statement is an effort by ACE and other interested education associations to assist institutions in examining their present policies and procedures with respect to the academic elements of athletic eligibility. For further information on the statement, contact Jerry W. Miller, Director, Division of Academic Affairs and Institutional Relations.

The Coach as an Educator

Given the nature of athletic competition, a coach's won-lost record over a several-year period must be one, but not the sole, criterion for determining effectiveness. In an institution of higher learning, winning without concern for total human development is not an acceptable objective. Institutions, therefore, should take steps to provide coaches with a measure of job security that encourages and incorporates evaluation of other accomplishments.

The underlying concept should be that the coach is an educator interested in the total development of the student athlete. Coaches should be required to show a concern for the academic standing of the institution by recruiting academically qualified student athletes and by encouraging their academic success. Coaches should be expected to exemplify good conduct and sportsmanship in their personal behavior. The chief executive officer should discuss overall performance standards with coaches, and these standards should be specified in coaching contracts.

Locus of Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for the institution's athletic program rests with the chief executive officer under policies adopted by the governing board. The senior academic administrator may be delegated responsibility for monitoring the admission of athletes and the certification of their continuing athletic eligibility by the admissions and records officer of the institution. Either the chief executive officer or the designated senior academic administrator should regularly review with an appropriate faculty committee the policies, procedures, and information bearing on academic integrity and athletic eligibility. The committee membership should be structured to prevent any actual or seeming conflict of interest between it and the athletic department. The responsible official and the committee should assure that adequate attention is given to the following concerns.

Transcripts and Test Score Reports

The policies and procedures applied to the handling of transcripts and test scores should be the same for student athletes as for all other students. In no case should transcripts or test scores be handled by the athletic department. The regularly designated office, usually the admissions or registrar's office, should be the recipient and the evaluator of all such information. The individual student athlete should have major personal responsibility for assuring that all such records are transmitted to the college or university through normal channels. If admission policies include provisions for accepting late test scores and transcripts, such provisions should be described in writing and a statement about the practice circulated among key faculty members and administrators.

Academic Progress and Academic Advising

The institution should have policies and procedures to assure that the student athlete makes satisfactory progress toward earning a degree. Such assurance depends in large measure on an adequate system of academic advising that encompasses monitoring student progress toward a specific degree objective.

Each institution should establish its own standards for satisfactory progress. Given the diversity of academic institutions and degree programs, prescriptive external rules are not feasible. There are, however, common elements that should be included in each institution's normal progress policy. These elements include proper distribution of courses each semester among the requirements for general education, electives, and minor and major field of study; cumulative credit hours required for first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year standing; required grade-point averages; normal graduation time for fully matriculated students; and means for certifying normal progress. A memorandum of notification that an athletic scholarship has been awarded should state explicitly that the student athlete, in order to be eligible for athletic competition, must make normal progress toward graduation.

Achieving the student athlete's educational objective should be the overriding consideration in academic advising and in developing the student athlete's program of study. The primary responsibility for academic advising of student athletes should be carried out through regular academic channels at the institution. It may be desirable for the athletic department to monitor the academic progress of student athletes and to provide supplemental advising but in no case should it have the principal responsibility for these activities. Neither the regular advising system nor the supplemental system should relieve the student athlete of the primary responsibility for his or her own academic progress.

Transfer of Credit

A distinction may be made between *graduation requirements and athletic eligibility* in the policies of the institution regarding transfer of credit and the acceptance of courses offered by other institutions. For purposes of graduation, the policies should apply equally to all students, including student athletes. In situations where rules adopted by a national or regional athletic governing body restrict the use of off-campus and correspondence courses in establishing *athletic eligibility*, the rules of those agencies should apply. However, in no case should transfer policies with respect to meeting graduation requirements be more restrictive for student athletes than for other students.

All work presented for transfer credit should be evaluated in accordance with guidelines set forth in the institution's policy for acceptance of credits from other institutions. If an institution requires prior approval for any student to take courses at another institution, the same guidelines should, of course, apply to athletes. Regardless of an institution's general policy, it is recommended that student athletes obtain prior permission before attending another institution so as to ensure that athletic eligibility will not be jeopardized and also to ensure that the work will be applicable to degree requirements.

Transfer from Two-Year Institutions

For purposes of athletic eligibility, a distinction should be made between students who, when transferring from community and junior colleges, have completed an associate degree program and those who have only accumulated credit hours. Those who have completed a degree program should be eligible to participate in intercollegiate competition during their first semester at the institution. Student athletes with acceptable transfer work conforming to the institution's normal progress requirements and to the athlete's remaining years of athletic eligibility should also be eligible to participate in competition during the first semester. In cases where the acceptable transfer credits do not match normal progress requirements and the student's remaining years of athletic eligibility, the student athlete should be required to complete sufficient work to meet the normal progress requirement before being allowed to compete.

Specially Admitted Student Athletes

In institutions that offer special admissions programs, including college preparation and summer bridge courses, student athletes should have the same access to such opportunities as other students. Each institution should ensure that, for special admission purposes, student athletes whose academic backgrounds are not strong enough for regular admission are evaluated consistently with all other students.

The demands created by the combination of inadequate academic preparation for college study and extra time requirements for all intercollegiate sports require restrictions on the specially admitted student athlete that will not be necessary for student athletes meeting normal admission requirements. Prior to participating in intercollegiate competition in any sport, student athletes should be required to remedy academic deficiencies and to demonstrate the ability to perform college-level credit work. Practice session participation should be prohibited until at least one semester of successful full-time study in college credit courses has been completed. Participation in intercollegiate competition should be prohibited until at least two semesters of successful full-time study in college credit courses have been completed.

Analyses of Admissions and Academic Performance

Data relevant to the admission and academic performance of student athletes should be analyzed on a regular basis by the aforementioned senior academic administrator and faculty committee to help prevent abuse of academic standards and fraudulent academic practices. Secondary school grade-point averages, admissions test scores, and prior academic records for student athletes transferring to the institution are examples of relevant information. Patterns of courses taken by athletes that differ from patterns of the general student body will be helpful in pinpointing potential abuses involving student athletes. In general, data on athletes should be compared with those of the student body as a whole.

Analyses should be shared on a regular basis with the chief executive officer and the chief academic officer of the institution. Any problems uncovered should be reported immediately to the chief executive officer, as should be any intervention in academic matters by athletic directors, coaches, athletic department employees, alumni, or others.

Availability of Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures of the institution relating to academic integrity and athletic eligibility should be published and made available to faculty, administrators, students, and alumni who participate in the recruitment of student athletes.

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